

Exotic Plants - Early Detection Monitoring in the Southern Plains Network



Tamarisk

Importance / Issues

Exotic plants represent one of the most significant threats to natural resources in national parks. Exotic plants are a concern due to their abilities to reproduce prolifically, rapidly colonize new areas, displace native species, alter ecosystem processes across multiple scales, and detract from the interpretive value of park resources. In the Great Plains, grasslands have been increasingly degraded and fragmented, which results in increasing chances of exotic plant species invasion. There is often a time lag between the initial establishment of an invasive exotic and its rapid expansion toward local carrying capacity. Therefore, early detection and subsequent eradication is essential. This vital sign will focus on the early detection of exotic plants and areas most likely to see new colonizations. The area and percentage of exotic plants will be covered by the comprehensive vegetation protocols (Grassland Vegetation Communities and Wetland Vegetation Communities).

Preliminary Monitoring Objective

1. Detect incipient populations and new introductions of invasive exotic plant species.

Potential Measures

Presence, abundance, and distribution of new populations.

Protocol Development & Status

Tomye Folts-Zettner, with the Southern Plains Network, is the lead for the early detection of exotic plants vital sign protocol. SOPN's protocol will benefit from methods advocated in the Early Detection of Invasive Plant Species Handbook (a cooperative USGS/NPS task) and build on preliminary protocols of older networks. Pilot field seasons will likely begin at a small park (Washita Battlefield or Lyndon B. Johnson NHP) and a large park (Chickasaw NRA or Lake Meredith NRA) in 2007. The planned completion date for the protocol is November 2007.

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